

Life of the Spirit

VOL. XV APRIL 1961 NO. 178

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Communications regarding advertisements, subscriptions and orders should be
addressed to The Manager, Blackfriars Publications Ltd., 2 Serjeants' Inn,
London, E.C.4. (Tel. FLE 9751) Annual subscription, 30s. 0d. (\$4.50).
Single copies 2s. 6d. (50 cents).*

Printed in England at the Grosvenor Press, Portsmouth

Editorial

No apology is needed for devoting a number of *The Life of the Spirit* to St Catherine of Siena, least of all in this year, the centenary of her canonization by Pius II on the 29th June 1461. The Church may have canonized greater saints—it is not for us to judge—but very few in whom the essence of Christian holiness, the transformation into a likeness of the incarnate Word, has so visibly and vividly appeared; and certainly Dominican history offers no clearer example of the Dominican ideal in action. It is at once paradoxical and strangely appropriate that the Order that is doctrinal par excellence, whose motto is Truth and special concern is theology, should have come to see in this young unlettered woman so authentic a representative of what it essentially stands for. Catherine is the supreme witness in our history, and perhaps in all Christian history, to the charismatic nature of Christian wisdom, to the truth that intellectual growth in the faith comes, essentially, from a love-union with Christ, and so from the Holy Spirit who 'gives to each one as he wills' for the common good of the Church. One can hardly think of her without recalling the great texts on this matter of her master St Paul; especially, perhaps, I Corinthians 1, 18-2, 16, and 12, 4-11. No one better than St Catherine can teach us, by example even more than by precept, that in theology the root of the matter is not a professional technique (however useful this may be) but docility to the Spirit: *non solum discens sed et patiens divina*.¹

A canonization is an event in history, conditioned more or less by human factors; and St Catherine's has a certain piquancy from the fact that the pope who raised her to the altars was the humanist Pius II. As Aenas Silvius Piccolomini this refined scholar and exquisite latinist had been a man of the world in every sense and also a near-schismatic. Yet he proved a worthy and devoted pope, in circumstances of great difficulty for the Church; and it is permissible to think that the prayers of Catherine his compatriot (for the Piccolomini were Sieneſe) played their part in this change. On the eve of the Great Schism she had offered her life for the unity of the Church; and he in turn gave himself to the same cause with a persistence that no other pope was to show before the outbreak of the Reformation.

Humanist pope and medieval saint, how far away in time they seem,

¹cf. *Summa theol.* 2a 2ae . 45 . 2.

how remote in their culture and social circumstances. Yet the spring that fed the saint's mind and heart—as servant of the Christian people, as intrepid explorer of the Christian mystery—this spring, this living source remains: Jesus Christ 'the same yesterday and today and forever'.

The Spirit of St Catherine of Siena¹

KENELM FOSTER O.P.

We commonly think of St Catherine as the greatest of Dominican tertiaries; and so no doubt she is; it is as natural to think that of her as to think of St Thomas as our greatest theologian. Yet it is easier to assess the greatness of a theologian than the greatness of a tertiary. Theology is a science; being a tertiary is a vocation. You can compare one theologian with another in respect of qualities that are fairly evident, at least in principle, for they are intellectual qualities expressed in rational argument. A theologian is great in the degree that he gives satisfactory answers to the questions put by the human mind when it asks, what does the Christian faith mean? It is true that a theologian will not be able to give such answers with a clarity and profundity that deserve to be called great unless his intellect is docile to the Holy Spirit, that is unless he has the Gifts of understanding and wisdom to a high degree. But, this granted, his work is a definite body of expressed argu-

A lecture to the Congress of London Dominican tertiaries, 1960. Most of the quotations are from St Catherine's letters, and I have used the critical edition of these by E. Dupré Theseider, *Epistolario di S. Caterina da Siena*, Rome 1940. Unfortunately only volume I of this edition has so far been published; but as it contains 88 letters written between 1373 and January 1377—i.e., one half of St Catherine's short life as a writer—it is a fairly representative selection. For the convenience of readers I have added, in each case, to the number-reference to the Dupré Theseider edition the number of the corresponding letter in the better known Tommaseo edition (1860, and reprinted without alteration by Misciatelli in 1912). The former number is in Roman numerals, the latter in Arabic.

ment capable of being critically assessed in itself and compared with the work of other minds that have worked over the same material, the Christian revelation as accessible to reason. But to compare one tertiary with another is like comparing one religious with another. And religious are great, as such, in the degree of their holiness, that is in the degree of their fidelity to the grace of their vocation. And who are we to measure fidelity to grace? Grace, the presence of God in the soul, is an element we cannot fathom. It eludes our human techniques of criticism and classification. We have to do our best with the 'conjectural signs' that St Thomas speaks of²—the signs of grace; and in our present case with what may be called the Dominican grace, by which I mean the interior spiritual quality that makes a good Dominican.

What is this quality? Well, various descriptions might serve, but I propose for the moment this: a love of Christ as the truth. Essentially we are preachers; and what we preach, and also the tone and special stress of our preaching as authentically Dominican, has never been more vividly and succinctly described than in words written long before the Order began, in the second Epistle to the Corinthians: 'For we preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ our Lord; we, your servants for Jesus' sake. For the same God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness" has shone into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus'.³ In these words St Paul expressed with singular clarity his own apostolic ideal; which was also to be St Dominic's ideal. The early Dominicans had a great devotion to St Paul; and this was perfectly natural; and, as we shall see, it was to be one of the Dominican characteristics of St Catherine. The Dominican is a contemplative who endeavours to communicate his contemplation: *contemplata aliis tradere*⁴ But when we repeat, as we so often do, this Thomist formula—we do well to remember the one object implied in the two verbs, *contemplare* and *tradere*. It is not philosophy that we, as Dominicans, preach; it is not even theology; these are only our necessary instruments. What we preach, or should preach, is 'Jesus Christ our Lord . . . the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus'. And it is precisely because St Catherine so superbly preached Christ as the image and glory of the Father, as the *prima verità*, as she loved to call him (echoing St Thomas) she counts as a great Dominican preacher. But of course no merely verbal preaching, however eloquent, could

² Ia 2ae. II2. 5.

³2 Cor. 4: 5-6.

⁴cf. 3a. 40. I ad 2.

have gained her this title; indeed no such preaching would be a preaching of Christ, in the sense St Paul meant; for Christ is a person and a person is not preached, in this sense, by merely being talked about. To know Christ you must love him; to make him known the preacher must love him. Words void of love are as 'sounding brass and tinkling cymbal'. It was Catherine's contemplative love, expressed with her eager burning untutored eloquence, that made her a great preacher, one of the greatest in our history.

And yet she was only a tertiary. The 'only' is not an impertinence, it simply points to the paradox that her case presents, the paradox that is of the essence of her strange history and is inseparable from her example. Catherine embodies the tertiary ideal, but she lived this ideal with such an ardour of intellect and will as seemingly to overrun by far the normal limits of the tertiary status; so that one may even wonder how so extraordinary a tertiary could be set up as a model for tertiaries. And yet, if we look more closely, we shall see that she is indeed a perfect model; not of course in the external details of her activity, nor yet in her inimitable 'style', but in the spirit that always inspired her. Indeed, we shall come to see that she was great, and great as a preacher and spiritual leader, not in spite of being a tertiary and a woman, but just because she was these things; that it was not accidental but essential to her achievement that she was a tertiary and a woman. She acted within the limits, though certainly stretching them to the utmost, imposed by her status and her sex. Apparently transcending these conditions, what she did in fact was to realise their fullest possibilities in the moment of time which was hers. She remained rooted in the soil from which she sprang; and if she sprang so high it was only that she realised to a heroic degree the range and scope of the grace that was given her. As Dante would say, it was by the power of truth that she soared: *la verità che tanto ci sublima*.⁵ But a tertiary and a woman she remained, and these conditioning facts, I repeat, are of the essence of her achievement. They define its paradoxical quality; and though, in this article, I am more concerned with her teaching than with the details of her career, it may help to bring out a little more clearly the special quality of her vocation if I touch briefly on the circumstances of her life.

You know the outlines of her story; let me remind you of some details. Born, 'as far as we know',⁶ in 1347, Catherine was the twenty

⁵*Paradiso* xxii, 42: The truth that so exalts us.

⁶A. Levasti, *My Servant Catherine*, p. 1.

third child of Jacopo Benincasa, a fairly prosperous dyer of Siena in Tuscany. Of her three greatest fellow Tuscans of that age, Dante Alighieri had been dead twenty five years when Catherine was born, Petrarch, now at the height of his fame but still living in Provence, was forty three, Boccaccio was thirty four. The Church since 1305 had been ruled from Avignon. Siena was a small republic of Ghibelline traditions, still independent despite the growing power of Florence to the north west; a busy, tough little Tuscan commune in fact, though if Dante's mockery is anything to go by, the Sienese had some reputation for dreamy vanity and bizarre recklessness:

‘Or fu già mai
gente sì vana come la sanese?’⁷

However that they may have been, the Benincasa were practical bourgeois folk and in the crowded higgledy piggledy of Jacopo's house Catherine grew up in full touch with human realities. She grew up quickly, too, in grace: before she was twelve she had vowed her virginity to Christ, a step which brought her into direct conflict with her family; and at eighteen or nineteen she was received into the Dominican tertiary sisterhood of Siena. Already for several years she had lived as a recluse in the tiny room her holy obstinacy had wrung from her father, only leaving it to help with the housework and go to church; but now as a tertiary, a *mantellata*, she began to visit the sick and work in the hospitals. And now too her mind, formed by a continuous intense contemplation of Christ, began to radiate its influence. People began to fall under her spell; a spiritual family gathered around her. For a dozen years now, till her death in 1280, Catherine was never to be without her group of friends and disciples—men and women, priests (both secular and religious) and layfolk, most of them her seniors, but all, in varying degrees, her spiritual pupils. Three of them, laymen, became her secretaries, writing letters at her dictation. Most of them seem to have called her ‘mother’, and she called them her children. It was of course a very extraordinary situation. She was a woman, she was young, she was not of noble birth, she had never been to school, she was not even a nun; the wonder is not that her position, depending as it did entirely on her personality, aroused opposition, but that it aroused so little. But medieval society, though stiff with social and legal restraints, was spiritually, in a sense, less restricted than modern society. It had every vice, it has been said, except vulgarity—an epigram that may be questioned, but which does point to a certain relative absence

⁷*Inferno* XXIX, 122: Have there ever been people so vain as the Sienese?

of spiritual cowardice in that age, an absence which left room for heroism to expand with a candour and spontaneity that are only too rare today. The Church herself, in the relations between her members, found room for more candid and direct approaches than have been customary since the Reformation. And so a young laywoman like Catherine could address her own father confessor as 'my son in Christ' without anyone finding this particularly shocking. People questioned her sanctity, of course; but no one who had once admitted her sanctity seems to have been shocked at the tone of authority she habitually adopted. And it was a very high tone, indeed. When she writes to her secretary, young Neri Landoccio, as 'my beloved son in Christ', we are not surprised, but we may well be surprised to find her addressing the government of Florence as 'my very dear fathers and sons' ('fathers' because these men had civil authority, 'sons' because she was about to give them some spiritual counsel—which, as it happened, they were reluctant to receive); and we may be still more surprised to find her writing to a group of religious who had preceded her to Avignon in 1376, a group that included her own director Bd Raymund of Capua and an Augustinian master in theology, and addressing these eminent divines, she, a young woman of twenty nine, as 'my children in Christ', adding for good measure 'It is my will and command that each of you be subject to the other, and that you bear with one another's defects'.⁸ Let me add that the tone of her letters to Bd Raymund is usually less explicitly maternal than that; she usually calls him simply 'my father'.

I have alluded to the criticisms she encountered; by 1374 her reputation had grown sufficiently for these to be taken seriously by the Dominican authorities, and she was summoned to appear before the General Chapter of the Order, which met at Florence in that year, to give an account of herself. It must have been a formidable experience even for Catherine, but she satisfied the assembled fathers that she could be trusted, and so returned to Siena greatly strengthened by this official approval. It is worth insisting on the immense importance for Catherine of being able to carry on her work under the wing of the Order; in the medieval Church the Order of St Dominic was relatively more important than it has ever been since. In those days the Dominicans as a body were the highest theological authority in the Church, at once an intellectual élite and a touchstone of orthodoxy. Catherine could no more have done what she did had she been merely a laywoman than she could have done it had she been an enclosed nun. And her Dom-

⁸Epist. LXV (219).

inican connection was a special advantage.

After that journey to Florence the range of Catherine's activities widened rapidly. In 1375 we find her at Pisa busy with propaganda for a Crusade (the one project of hers that never looked like succeeding) and in 1376 she was at Avignon. The immediate occasion of this visit to the papal court was a war which Florence had started against the Holy See. Catherine in fact was the Florentine ambassador to Gregory XI, and on the whole a successful one. But her major success on this occasion (and it was an astonishing achievement) was to persuade the pope to return to Rome, which he did in the following January. Catherine herself was back in Italy before the end of 1376, working as a peace-maker in and around Siena and, with less success, in Florence. But in the autumn of 1378 what she had dreaded happened; the great schism began, and with it, for Catherine, her final prolonged spiritual agony, that desperate struggle for the unity of the Bride of Christ and on behalf of the authority of Urban VI, which was to bring her, utterly exhausted, to her death in Rome on the 29th April 1380. Her book, the famous *Dialogue*, had been dictated to her secretaries by Sept. 1378.

Reflecting on this life, so brief and so marvellously full, one is struck most perhaps, at first, by two things: by the extremely personal character of Catherine's vocation and by her amazing courage; and these two things in a sense are one. For her vocation was first a most intimate and personal self-surrender to our Lord in the secrecy of her cell, and then an entirely fearless living out the consequences of that surrender in the face of the world and the Church. Significant in this connection is her idea of the spiritual cell, the 'cell of self-knowledge' (by which, as we shall see, she meant a knowledge of oneself gained by contemplation of one's lover *par excellence*, the incarnate truth); it was an idea that she did not invent but to which she gave a new stress and a new currency. All her activity, all her strange authority and power—and for a short time her personality was a dominant factor in the western Church—all this sprang straight from her personal experience of Christ. All her writings are marked by the tone and authority which experience alone can give. No saint has more evidently exemplified the words of St Paul, 'the spiritual man judges all things and is himself judged by no man'. Her judgment—fortunately—was the authentically spiritual sort that includes self-judgment, humility. And humility she learned at the source, from the humble *dolce Agnello*. But having learned this lesson, her judgment was henceforth free, and she used it with a candour, a courage and also (despite appearances to the contrary) on the whole with

a certain sweetness and charm which make Savonarola, for example, seem by comparison heavy-handed, tactless and harsh. Admittedly Savonarola had his own peculiar difficulties; and was not a woman.

On her spiritual teaching I must speak with diffidence. My impressions are gathered from some familiarity with her letters and rather less familiarity with the *Dialogue*. This teaching is not, I need hardly say, speculative theology. It was a deduction from her experience of God, an experience gained through love but issuing, none the less, in certain quite distinct conceptions which served her as starting points in meditation and teaching. There is nothing hazy about Catherine's mind; nor does she, as some great and orthodox mystics have done, stress the unknowability or ineffability of God. Certain aspects, so to say, of God she fastened on with her intelligence and turned at once into practical principles. She knew through love, and in order to love; yet certainly she knew and delighted in knowledge. Her spirituality shows her Dominican training; a clear, positive intellectual vision is worked out unfalteringly in practice. The wisdom we find in her writings answers closely to St Thomas's description: 'wisdom as a Gift of the Holy Spirit has indeed its cause in the will, namely charity; but its essence is in the intellect whose act is to judge rightly'.⁹

Her starting point is God our lover; and God's love she sees always in two facts: the creation of 'the creature that has reason', and the redemption of this creature from sin; the original creative act and then the recreative act of incarnation and crucifixion; God's pouring out of being and God's pouring out of blood. Let me illustrate these two main points from Catherine's writings.

I. *God's love shown in the creation of man.* 'I am that which is; thou art that which is not', said our Lord to Catherine:¹⁰ the gift of existence precedes all others. 'Thou art he', she cries to God, 'who alone art good, thou the tranquil sea whence flow all things that exist'.¹¹ 'Do not love yourself for yourself, but for God; nor any creature for itself, but for the praise and glory of God's name; and do not love God for yourself, for your utility, but love God for God's sake, as the sum of goodness all worthy to be loved. Then will your love be perfect, not mercenary; then you will be unable to think of anything but Christ crucified . . . and that perfect charity which God gave you and showed you before the creation of the world, being in love with you before you existed;

⁹2a 2ae. 45. 2.

¹⁰Raymund of Capua, *Life of St Catherine*, I, ch. 10.

¹¹Epist. I (30).

for had he not been in love he would never have created you. By the love he had for you, seeing you in himself, he was moved to give you being'.¹² And again: 'Love, love; see, before you ever love, you were loved. For as God gazed into himself he fell in love with his creature's beauty, and so created it, moved by the fire of unutterable charity; and to this end only, that the creature might have eternal life and enjoy the infinite good that God enjoyed in himself'.¹³ It is from this idea of creation that Catherine draws out her high conception of the dignity of the rational soul with its inborn desire of the divine essence from which it has come. 'Think', she writes, 'that the first clothing we received was love, created as we are to the image and likeness of God, and this only through love; and so man cannot live without love, being made of nothing but love, and all that he has, both in soul and in body, he only has through love'.¹⁴ The mention here of the body is an allusion to the sexual love involved in parenthood, but the unmediated divine love creating the rational soul is what draws all Catherine's attention; it is basically because of this love that the soul 'in this life can find no peace, for its desire is never satisfied until it be joined and oned with the divine essence';¹⁵ until it 'become one thing (*una cosa*) with the first truth, the sweet truth'.¹⁶

And an immediate consequence is her stress on the soul's original natural freedom from all things except God; a stress, by the way, that she shares with Dante. 'Here is shown the immense goodness of God, in the treasure he has given to the soul, the power to decide freely and for itself'.¹⁷ This sentence, in the Italian, recalls to me some lines of the *Paradiso* which delighted Chesterton:

*Lo maggior don che Dio per sua larghezza
fesse creando ed a la sua bontate
piú conformato equel ch'e' piú apprezza,
fu de la volontà la libertate . . .*¹⁸

¹²Epist. XVIII (29).

¹³Epist. XVII (28).

¹⁴Epist. LII (not in Tommaseo's edition, this letter was discovered by Edmund Gardner and printed in the appendix to his *Saint Catherine of Siena*, London 1907).

¹⁵Epist. XVIII (29).

¹⁶Epist. XLV (137).

¹⁷Epist. XVII (28).

¹⁸*Paradiso* v, 19-22: 'the greatest gift that God in his generosity gave in creating, and the one that most corresponds to his goodness and that he accounts the most precious, was the freedom of the will' . . .

Whether Catherine ever read or heard read a line of Dante we cannot say, though doubtless she heard his name mentioned. It is St Paul, anyhow, not the poet, whom she recalls in the next phrase: 'for no devil or any creature whatsoever can constrain the soul to a mortal sin against its will'—one, I think, of many echoes of a favourite passage from *Romans* 8. But then suddenly this flash of her own *alta fantasia*: 'know that in the very act of man's creation these words were spoken to him, "let it be done as you will", that is, "I create you free—subject to nothing whatsoever except me". O inestimably lovable fire of love that dost so declare and make manifest the creature's nobility, creating all things to serve thy creature, and thy creature to serve thee! But we, miserable wretches, turn away to love the world . . . and through this love the soul loses its lordship and becomes servant and slave of sin. It takes the devil for its lord'.¹⁹ Elsewhere she works back to this notion of the soul's original dignity as 'the creature that has reason' by way of the re-creation in the redeeming blood of Christ. 'Think . . . that the soul that loves God, the servant and slave redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, comes to such dignity that no longer can she be called servant but empress, as bride of the eternal emperor . . . To serve God is to reign. He takes away her servitude to sin, he makes her free. Strong indeed then is this perfect union (with Christ in charity) which adding to the dignity of creation, by a love-union brings to perfection that primal dignity of being, joining the creature with its creator'.²⁰

It was with an eye to such texts as these, I suppose, that Père Deman wrote: 'According to current views, what needs explaining is how man ever does what is right; but as Catherine sees it, what needs explaining is how man can ever go wrong. Others seek the cause of human goodness, because they think man is naturally inclined to evil; she looks for the cause of evil, being convinced that at the root and origin of human life is a desire for the good. Hence . . . Catherine's notion of self-love as that which makes natural desire deviate and go astray. And even so she will say that self-love makes us seek the good where it is not to be found, not that it inclines us to evil. This obstacle once removed, nature goes free'.²¹ Catherine's delight then, like Dante's, in the doctrine of creation, springs in part from the assurance it gives her that our nature is basically 'good and for the good', as Dante said.²²

¹⁹Epist. XXIV (69).

²⁰Epist. XVIII (29).

²¹T. Deman, O.P., in *Vie Spirituelle, Supplément*, Oct. 1934, p. II.

²²*Purgatorio* XXVIII, 92.

Only we must not in the least underrate her awareness, her horrified awareness, of that 'obstacle', self-love. Self-love for her is the root of all evil, and the whole world stinks with its horrible fruit. She attacks it again and again. Her extremely acute sense of its presence and power in the soul is the reason why she so insists on the need for self-knowledge. To know oneself is to know sin; and there is no way to God except through hatred and love: hatred of self and love of Christ. The two attitudes, hatred and love, are inseparable, for to love Christ, 'the dear Lamb drained of his blood', is simply to plunge into his blood, and the whole point and meaning of this blood is the reversal, the annulling of self-love. To enter the blood is to enter God's love as an active purifying force and to co-operate in the purification that it effects. This is the great Catherinian theme, elaborated with a persistent, persuasive use of blood-imagery, and, only less, of fire-imagery. Every letter she wrote starts with a praise of the blood, often linked with St Paul's image of the 'vesture of the new man', the being 'clothed with Christ'. But sometimes the Pauline metaphor suffices by itself. 'You ask, how should we be clothed? I answer: with hatred and with love; as when one puts on a new dress, loathing the old one and tearing it off and putting on the new one with love . . . And where shall we find this hatred? Only in self-knowledge'. . .²³ Or again, dropping all metaphor: 'The holy and sweet remedy of knowing that as a creature one has no being of oneself . . . and that one is forever doing that which is not, namely sin. And once a soul has known itself it knows God's goodness in itself, and knowing this, it loves God and loathes itself—not loathing itself as a creature, but as a rebel against the creator'.²⁴ Here again, as always with Catherine, hatred is balanced and explained by love. But the hatred is deadly serious, and its special object is sensuality, the *amore sensitivo*. Here is the special stress and motive of Catherine's very realistic, very physical asceticism. She did not hate the body as such, but she took to extremes the Christian sense that in fallen man the body is the chief instrument of sin. Her own body she treated without mercy. It seems certain that for years she ate scarcely anything except the consecrated host. And yet—or was it somehow because of this?—we are told that quite literally she smelled good; people were refreshed by her scent as well as by her smile.

2. *God's love displayed in the recreation of Man by Christ.* I have already touched on this theme and I have no time here to draw out its applica-

²³Epist. XLIX (108).

²⁴Epist. XXIII (101).

tions, in her later letters especially and in the *Dialogue*, to the theme of the Church—the Church which ‘holds the keys of the blood’.²⁵ She is, we know, one of the saints who have been most concerned with the thought and the affairs of the Church; she is one of the great Catholic reformers. But I pass over that side of her work. Nor will I dwell on her meditations on the incarnation, nor on the famous image of Christ as the ‘bridge’. But I want, in the time that remains, to touch briefly on some passages concerning Christ (and in a sense she has no other theme but him) which may help to bring out her characteristic stress on three virtues in particular: charity, gratitude and patience.

Charity is love responding to love. Its starting point, from our side, is knowledge. Always she insists on the need for knowledge: ‘open the eye of knowledge’. And the pupil of this eye is faith. It is remarkable how she insists on the *seeing* power of faith. Far from stressing, as so many mystics and theologians do, the darkness of faith, she if anything exaggerates the knowledge it gives. This perhaps is because her own faith was so concentrated and focussed on one point, the revelation of God’s love in Christ. It was thoroughly Christocentric, like St Paul’s. And like St Paul’s her ethical teaching is dominated by charity, and charity she sees always as a love of response, a loving in return for love.

‘You know . . . that to unite two things, there must be nothing in between; anything in between would impede union. Consider then that this is how God wills the soul to be, without any intermediary love whether of itself or any other creature. For God loves us directly, without intermediary; being grand and generous he has loved gratuitously, not as paying a debt but as loving without being loved. Such love as this it is not in human power to give. When man loves he is always paying a debt, for he never ceases to receive and share the gifts of God’s goodness. So we have to love with this second love; but let it be clean and generous so that we love nothing apart from God . . . And if you ask me “where shall I find this love?” I answer that there is no finding it except we draw it from the spring of the first Truth. In this spring you will see the dignity and beauty of your soul; for you will see the Word, the Lamb drained of his blood, who has given himself to you as your food and ransom, moved by nothing but the fire of love . . . The soul then . . . gazes into this spring and drinks at it, . . . seeing everything in the spring of God’s goodness, so that it is for God’s sake she loves all that she loves and apart from him she loves nothing. And how can the soul that has once seen in this way the boundless

²⁵Epist. xvii (28); and frequently elsewhere.

goodness of God, possibly be held back from loving?'²⁶

How characteristic is that last phrase; for all her self-knowledge Catherine was an innocent; it was really always a wonder to her that people did not love God as she did. But let us read on a little in the same letter and see her question her own rejection of every medium between the soul and God, in order to draw out further the meaning of charity.

'Let there be nothing then in between; no medium save only divine charity, the sweet glorious medium that divides not but unites But you may object: "You have told us God wants nothing in between him and us, and now you say we should put something in between". I answer, put the fire of divine charity in between; the medium that is no medium but makes us one thing with him. It is as when wood is thrust into fire. Does it remain wood any more? No, it has become one thing with fire. But there is a medium that removes God from you—self-love! And yet this medium itself is utterly unreal, for sin is a nothing and has no foundation but self-love and enjoyments apart from God . . . It was in this sense that I said that God wants no medium. And no love can last away from the true medium'.²⁷

And again: 'O wondrous, sweetest charity, what moved thee? Love alone . . . For as between stone and stone, to weld them into strength a builder puts cement mixed with water, so God has welded the soul to himself with the blood of his . . . Son, mixed with the living cement of the fire of his charity; for the blood is not without fire, nor the fire without blood. The blood was shed with the fiery love of God for the human race'.²⁸

A favourite idea is that it was not the nails but love which kept 'God and man fixed to the cross'. Another is that he on the cross has made himself 'table, food and servant' of the soul. Always she stresses the lowliness, gentleness, servitude of Christ, the *umile dolce Agnello*. And this stress is paradoxically inseparable from her other stress, in practice, on all that is free, bold, high-minded and fierce in Christian living.

Her stress on charity as a love of response becomes inevitably, a stress on gratitude; indeed, at times she seems to combine all sins under ingratitude, just as she finds their common root in self-love. 'Shame, shame on man's pride, complacency, self-love; to see so much goodness poured out on him . . . so many graces as benefits received—as pure

²⁶Epist. LVIII (164).

²⁷Epist. LVIII (164).

²⁸Epist. LII (Gardner, Appendix I).

gifts, not as anything owed. The stupidity . . . that seems not to feel or see the heat of this love, such heat that, were we stones, it must have smashed us by now. Alas, alas, I can see but one cause of this, that the eye of knowledge has not chosen to look up at the tree of the cross where such heat of love is displayed . . . See there the generosity that has opened and torn its own body, draining itself of blood for our bath and baptism'.²⁹ And elsewhere, more simply: 'ingratitude dries up the springs of piety'.³⁰

So much talk of blood will naturally not be to everyone's taste. Even so sympathetic a reader as Miss Hilda Graef, for example, in her excellent book *The Light and the Rainbow*, finds it excessive, contrasting St Catherine's outpourings on the precious blood with the sobriety of St John and St Paul.³¹ Well, each to his taste; but God really did bleed, and all that Catherine does is to dwell on this fact as the supreme image and sign of divine love and the chief motive for ours. It haunted her day and night. An unconscious poet, she thought with symbols, and the blood became the symbol of symbols in which to express her experience and understanding of Christianity. And I suppose her readers will always divide into those who find her indelicacy in this matter rather repulsive and those who find it (as I do) magnificent.

The other virtue she very characteristically stresses is patience. In a way it is her moral touchstone or test-virtue, as the typical virtue of the Christian in this world, of the *viator*, of the soul on its pilgrimage, beset by temptation. As she saw it, I think, patience is simply the strength of the soul cleaving to God despite everything to the contrary. Patience, in this sense, is active rather than passive; temptations and difficulties are things to be used rather than avoided. The virility of this attitude is highly characteristic. 'No virtue', Catherine writes, 'is acquired, no virtue grows perfect in the absence of its contrary' (*senza el suo contrario*—the *contrario* being, of course, not vice, in the virtuous man, but temptation); 'so that if a man shuns the contrary thing he turns away from that virtue with which he ought to fight and overcome its contrary vice'.³² Again, 'the test of virtue is its contrary; through pride one acquires humility, and through impatience patience'.³³ To a woman of her temperament patience must have been

²⁹Epist. XXIII (101).

³⁰Epist. LXVIII (207).

³¹*The Light and the Rainbow* (1959) pp. 252-3.

³²Epist. LXXXVIII (252).

³³Epist. LXX (211).

particularly difficult; which no doubt is why she lays such emphasis on it. But the way she does this itself betrays her temperament—or better perhaps, her vivid sense of the power of the will. She loved sinners but she expected a great deal from them. She loves to say that there is absolutely no need to sin; sin is in the will alone, and the will in respect of all creatures, is absolutely free. We are lords of nothing really, she tells the Lord of Milan, except of ‘the city of our soul’, but of this city we are lords indeed.³⁴ The soul is free-born; *la libertà è donna*, ‘liberty is a lady’, and that is why, she adds, ‘no devil or any other creature can constrain me to sin if I do not choose’.³⁵ Again: ‘no one can constrain us to commit the least sin, since God has placed “yes” and “no” in the strongest thing there is, in the will’.³⁶ The context makes it clear—should a theological eyebrow be lifted here—that she is speaking of the soul in grace.

I began this talk by calling Catherine a great preacher; I hope that the texts I have quoted will not have left you disappointed. I even hope that they may induce some of you who have not read her to start reading in a small way—preferably in her own Tuscan, which should not be too difficult for anyone with a smattering of Italian. In any case, enough has been said to remind you of your patron. St Catherine is not everybody’s saint; her ways seem perhaps too sublime, too divine for her ever to become really popular: *vera incessu patuit dea*. But she is our saint; and at her feet we can learn, if we will, much about the love of Christ; which is the beginning and the end of all her teaching. It is as a great lover that she will draw us, if she does draw us. For, as she says, ‘the heart of a man is drawn by nothing so much as by love; for man is made of love, and this seems to be the reason why he loves so much, being made of nothing but love whether in soul or in body. For it was through love that God created him to his image and likeness, and it is through love that a father and a mother give him of their substance, conceiving and begetting their child. And therefore God, seeing man so apt for love, throws down the hook of love to us, giving us the Word, the only begotten Son, who took our humanity to make a great peace’.³⁷

³⁴Epist. xviii (29).

³⁵Epist. xxxvi (148).

³⁶Epist. xvii (28).

³⁷Epist. lxiv (196).

Catherine the Dominican

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH O.P.

'Look (said the Eternal Father to St Catherine) at the ship of your father Dominic, my beloved son, and see how perfectly it is rigged. He wanted their sole concern to be my honour and the salvation of souls by the light of true knowledge. This light was to be his main object, but he did not neglect real voluntary poverty. He observed it himself, and as a sign of this and his disapproval of the contrary he left as his last will and testament to his sons his own curse, and mine, upon any who might have private possessions. But he took as his particular aim the light of true knowledge, for the uprooting of the errors of the times. He assumed the office of the Word, my only-begotten Son, . . . he was a light, which by means of Mary I placed in the world within the mystical body of Mother Church, as an uprooter of heresy. Why did I say "by means of Mary"? Because Mary gave him the habit . . . And he wants them to be obedient, to do what they are told. And because impure living obscures the eye of the mind . . . and because he wants them to receive most perfectly the light of true knowledge, he gave them the third vow of chastity, to be observed with perfect obedience. Today indeed these things are badly observed; the light of true knowledge is turned into darkness by the darkness of pride . . . and where there is pride there is no obedience . . .

'So there is his ship, so well rigged with the three ropes of obedience, chastity and true poverty. But he took account of reality and did not bind his sons under pain of mortal sin . . . he made provision for the less perfect among them, for although all in the Order are in a way perfect, yet in this life some are more perfect than others, and there are both perfect and imperfect in the crew of this ship. . . . It is like a wide and gay and fragrant garden, all delight in itself, but there are in the Order unhappy ones who are not observant and break the rule, and they have turned the garden into a wilderness (*l'hanno tucto insalvaticito*) . . . , but in the beginning it was not so'.

Thus St Catherine in the *Dialogo* (c. 148); and in the *Legenda* we also read how God drew for her a parallel between his Son, the eternal Word, who 'preached to the world the things I commanded him to preach and gave testimony to the truth, as he said to Pilate', and his adopted son, Dominic, who 'preached the truth of my words to the

world . . . not only by himself, but also through others; not only while he was alive, but also through his successors, by means of whom he went on preaching and still goes on preaching today' (*Legenda*, part II, c. 6: tr. George Lamb p. 184).

These are witnesses to St Catherine's exalted view of the vocation of the Dominican Order, but also to her awareness of the failure of many in the Order at the time to fulfil that vocation. She had joined the *Mantellate* at Siena, the group of Tertiaries engaged on good works in the city under the direction of the Dominican Fathers, in 1364 at the age of 17, and during the next ten years had begun to attract attention through her active apostolate. Her first journey outside her own city was in 1374, when at the command of the Master General of the Order, Elias Raymond of Toulouse, she came to Florence during the General Chapter of the Order being held there, to give an account of herself. Elias Raymond had become Master General in 1367 and already from the Chapter of 1370 had been concerned with making stricter the personal poverty of the friars, and he pursued this more strenuously at the Chapters of 1376 and 1378.

It was about this time (before 1376) that a rumour was spreading that Master General Elias was about to be made a cardinal. The rumour was in fact unfounded, but it would have meant his relinquishing his post as Master General. Catherine was writing to Pope Gregory XI at Avignon, and besought him, if the rumour were true, to appoint 'a good and virtuous man as our vicar' (i.e., until a new Master General were elected by the Order), 'since the Order has need of it, having become too much of a wilderness (*troppo insalvatichito*)' (Ep. 185 ed. Misciattelli); and urging a recommendation of the same matter to the Archbishop of Otranto she adds: 'Our present need is for a fearless surgeon who will wield the straight steel of holy justice; so much ointment has been used so far, that the limbs are nearly all rotten' (Ep. 183), and similarly to a prelate at the papal court, adding that 'our need is very great' (Ep. 181). In fact Elias Raymond continued as Master General, and when the schism came after the death of Gregory in Rome in 1378, Elias in common with most of the French chose to support the Avignon pope, and the Order, together with the rest of the Church, was split into two allegiances. The 1380 Chapter of the Avignon obedience, held under Elias Raymond at Lausanne, formally excommunicated those who rejected the authority of Clement VII or of Elias.

Meanwhile in the same year 1380 Catherine was dying in Rome on April 29th. Raymund of Capua, whom she had first met at the General

Chapter of Florence in 1374, who had then become her confessor and friend and who afterwards wrote the *Legenda*, was not present at her deathbed: he had been elected Provincial of Lombardy in 1379 and was at the time at Genoa; but another Father from Siena, Bartholomew Dominici, was there at the end, and it is from him that we learn that Catherine said that Raymund of Capua would soon be elected Master General. Indeed she had already hinted at this in her last letter to him, when she wrote of the need of humility especially 'if God should give you some exalted position', urging him to constant prayer and daily celebration of Mass. 'Fly from idle or useless conversation', she adds, 'be mature in your speech and behaviour, cast away all tenderness towards yourself and all servile fear, for the Church has no need of people like that: she needs people who are cruel with themselves but gentle with her' (Ep. 373, ed. Misciattelli). Exactly a fortnight after Catherine's death the General Chapter of 1380 was held by those of the Roman obedience at Bologna. Elias Raymond, who had gone over to the Avignon allegiance, was declared deposed, and Raymund of Capua was elected Master General in his place.

The schism had saddened the last two years of Catherine, who had worked so strenuously for the *santo passaggio* or transfer of the papacy back to Rome and had supported so keenly the Roman Urban VI. But now her spirit would live on in her friend Raymund, whom she used to call *padre e figliuolo dolcissimo* and who was now at the head of the Order. What was he going to do to bring the Order back to its former glory from being 'too much of a wilderness'?

To answer this we must go back to the time when he first became her friend. She met him the first time, as we have seen, in 1374, when Master General Elias also appointed him to be her confessor. It was in the following year, 1375, when they were both at Pisa, that she met several people (apart from that remarkable English adventurer, Sir John Hawkwood, whom she tried to persuade to turn his warlike energies to the crusades—Ep. 140, ed. Misc.), who were to have an important place in later Dominican history. First there was John Dominici, who must have been very young at the time, but who wrote to his mother of seeing Catherine at Pisa. As a Dominican he played a leading part in Raymund's reform of the Order, and as a cardinal at the Council of Constance in 1415 he had a principal share in the termination of the schism. And then there was Piero Gambacorta, a prosperous merchant who at the time was head of the Republic of Pisa, and who had invited her to Pisa the preceding year, but she had declined (Ep. 149, ed. Misc.).

Gambacorta had a daughter named Tora, whom he had given in marriage at the age of twelve to a noble and wealthy young man, in 1374. Tora and Catherine became friends and corresponded afterwards particularly in 1377 (Ep. 262, ed. Misc.), when she had become suddenly widowed. Catherine suggested she should remain a widow and enter the cloister: 'I should advise you for your own advantage to enter the ship of holy obedience, because this is the safest and most perfect way, since one can sail without pulling the oars oneself: it is the Order that pulls the oars'. Tora's voyage was none the less a stormy one. She ran away to a convent of Poor Clares and took the name of Clara, which she always kept afterwards. But her father brought her back by force and shut her up for five months. Eventually she was released, and in 1382 she entered the Convent of Holy Cross, of the Dominican nuns at Pisa. About the same time another young widow entered the same convent. This was Catherine Mancini. By 1375, when she also met Catherine at Pisa, she was about 24 and already twice a widow. She joined a group of *Mantellate* at Pisa, and St Catherine subsequently wrote to her and her friends to encourage them (Ep. 153, ed. Misc.). She took the name Maria when she entered at Holy Cross and became a friend of Clara Gambacorta. Observance was slack at this convent, as it was in many at the time, and these two young nuns began a movement towards perfect observance within their own community. The 'common life', that is, complete absence of personal possession, was to be restored; the question of the *camera*, or a room in the house to which one laid a special claim, was renounced; the law of enclosure was strictly observed, and attendance in choir and the practice of silence were to become normal and regular.

Thus the reform of the Order is sometimes dated from 1382, with Clara Gambacorta and Maria Mancini at Pisa deliberately striving after the ideals of observance of the early days of the Order. In 1385 those desirous of full observance decided to move to a new convent, with no prejudice to those who preferred the ways to which they had grown accustomed. Clara Gambacorta's father, now quite reconciled, built them a new convent which was called St Dominic's, and seven nuns moved there to start a life of perfect observance. The first prioress was one Suor Philippa, her successor was Clara, and the third was Maria. Various Fathers of the Order were watching the new experiment with interest, not least the Master General Raymund of Capua who recognized the beginning here of the realization of Catherine's hopes, through the work of her two young friends of Pisa.

There was a principle here at Pisa, which became a keystone of Raymund's whole scheme: here was a 'convent of observance', which no one was bound to go to, which no one was prevented from joining, and which existed with no prejudice to Holy Cross, where the old ways were preferred. In the First Order (of the Friars) there were already by 1387 some priories called 'reformed'. It was probably at the General Chapter (of the Roman obedience) at Vienna in 1388 (whose *acta* have perished) that the scheme was inaugurated, for it is reflected in the decree of Raymund of Capua in 1390 and the Bull of Pope Boniface IX of 1391, and it is from these documents that we learn how Raymund's scheme was to work. Each province of the Order was to have at least one 'priory of observance' numbering at least twelve men. None desirous of a life of perfect observance were to be prevented from going there, but none moreover were to be forced to go there. Among the Fathers, as with the nuns, the 'common life' was a key factor; but among the Fathers the *clausura* or enclosure had almost become a dead letter, and there was also the affair of the *camerae* (which we already find mentioned in the days of Elias Raymond). Special 'vicars' were sometimes appointed as superiors over a group of 'priories of observance': John Dominici became such a 'vicar' in Italy, and he had been a frequent visitor to the nuns at Pisa at the beginning. The movement spread quickly. Conrad of Prussia was the leader of the movement in Germany. Another visitor at Pisa had been Laurence of Ripafratta, who became the 'reformed' novice-master (surely a key-man in the scheme) at Cortona. Another visitor had been Frederico Frezzi, afterwards Provincial of Rome and then Bishop of Foligno. These were all people of influence. Raymund himself died while on visitation at Nürnberg in 1399, but the movement was well under way, and more and more priories throughout the Order were joining the reform. The first priory to be built as a reformed priory was Fiesole near Florence in 1406 where Antoninus of Florence was member of the new community, and a little later his friend Giovanni of Fiesole, better known as Fra Angelico.

Raymund's reform of the Dominican Order is an important phenomenon in monastic history. In all the older Orders there have been periods when the first fervour had declined, and it was humanly inevitable that this should be so. In most cases reformed branches or congregations began and frequently developed into juridically distinct bodies. But with the Dominicans the legal constitution of the Order from the beginning was such that any splintering from the juridical unity under the Master General (apart from the temporary division

during the schism) was unthinkable. Raymund's scheme was therefore essentially a reform from within; in most provinces the whole province gradually became 'observant', and the process was virtually complete within a hundred years. There are relics of the history in the titles of some provinces, such as *Utriusque Lombardiae*, i.e., both Upper and Lower Lombardy (further up or further down the River Po), one of which became wholly reformed before the other, until in 1531 they were united; and the *Provincia Sancti Marci* is a title dating back to the 'reformed congregation' including Fiesole and San Marco in Florence.

Another interesting feature is the part played by the nuns in Dominican history: St Dominic started the convent at Prouille before organising his men, Raymund's work can be seen beginning at Pisa, and in England Mother Margaret Hallahan began regular conventual life at Stone in the nineteenth century before Dominican monastic life was restored among the friars. And rightly she named her congregation after St Catherine of Siena.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the Order was at its lowest ebb in numbers since its birth, and it was Master General Jandel who had the task of rebuilding Dominican monastic life in the provinces described as *desolatae*. He used a method in 1850 not unlike that of Raymund of Capua: there were to be certain priories in the Order which were to be models of observance and through these the ideal should be gradually restored. Woodchester in England was one, Paris under Lacordaire was another, and Santa Sabina was under his personal care. And in the hundred years since then the features of regular observance, such as 'common life', have become the normal thing, so that monastic life without them seems unthinkable.

Thus the influence of St Catherine on the life of the Dominican Order, having spread throughout the Order under her immediate inspiration, is still at work in our midst. And one thing is certain: the Order of St Dominic would not be what it is today and what it has been for over five hundred years, had it not been for her.

A Daughter of Saint Catherine

A Comparison with Margaret Hallahan

SISTER MARY CATHERINE O.P. (S.M.C.)

On March the 25th 1347, in the Fontebranda, Siena, were born to Jacomo Benincasa and his wife Lapa, twin girls, the last of a family of twenty five. One, Giovanna, died shortly after birth, the other, Catherine, lived to become the glory of her city.

On January the 23rd 1802, over four and a half centuries later, in Saint Giles Rookery, one of London's slums, was born to Edmund Hallahan and his wife, Catherine, Margaret, the only child of poverty-stricken parents, but who grew up to be one of the very faithful followers of the dyer's daughter.

Both belonged to the people, but whereas one was the daughter of well-to-do parents, the other was the child of a casual—a very casual—labourer. Catherine died at the age of thirty three on April the 29th. Margaret doubled the life's span of her prototype and died on May the 11th at the age of sixty six.

Catherine's parents lived until she was a grown woman; Lapa in fact outlived her. Both Margaret's parents were dead by the time she was ten years old, and she was facing a hard life alone and friendless at an age when Catherine still had the shelter of a good home; though when she reached her teens and refused to consider marriage, life there was made none too easy for her.

Both were children of their own time insofar as Catherine's life was a succession of ecstasies and miracles, whereas the supernatural in Margaret's took an almost furtive character. One lived in a century when miracles and supernatural favours were in the accepted order of things, the other in a century of scepticism when everything out of the ordinary was questioned.

In this connection there is one detail of a remarkable likeness. Catherine wished to recite the Divine Office but could not read. She tried vainly to master the alphabet, but as all her efforts were fruitless, she said to God one day in prayer: 'Lord, if it be agreeable to thee that I may know how to read in order that I may recite the Divine Office and sing thy praises, vouchsafe to teach me, for I cannot learn of myself. If not, I am well content to remain in ignorance, or spend my time in such simple meditation as it shall please thee to grant'. God heard her

prayer and from that time on she was able to read any kind of writing as quickly and easily as the most experienced person.

Mrs. O'Shea, a schoolmistress, wrote of Mother Margaret. 'When she first went to Belgium she was much tried by her total ignorance of French and Flemish; in the latter the general instructions and sermons were given; and she felt she could not possibly learn it. But one day in the church she felt inspired to invoke the Holy Spirit for special light and grace to understand some lenten sermons soon to be given, and undertook to say the *Veni Creator* twice a day for that intention, rising every morning and going more than a mile to hear mass at five o'clock She told me she went to the church and found she quite understood the sermon, and from that time found no more difficulty in the language'.

Both made a private vow of chastity, and in this also we have likeness and contrast. Saint Catherine made hers at the age of seven. She considered the matter for some days, praying to our Lady. Then she went into the most secret place she could find and made her vow at our Lady's hands and through her.

Margaret was about twenty years old when she began to realise her good looks and the effect they had on others. She was busy in the kitchen when it was irresistibly borne in on her that she wished to belong to our Lord only. There and then she knelt down by a kitchen chair and made her vow of chastity. After which she resumed her household work.

Saint Catherine and Mother Margaret were both professed Secular Tertiaries. During the last sixteen years of her life Mother Margaret founded a Congregation with five convents of the Third Order conventual. Though Saint Catherine remained a Tertiary, nevertheless she founded a convent of Dominican sisters at Belcaro on the site of a castle given to her by one of her disciples.

During the earlier part of their lives both were servants. When her family tried to break Catherine of her penitential way of life in order that she might marry and settle down, they deprived her of all solitude, took away her room and made her do the domestic work of the house. But in this work, ceaseless though it was, she only found another way of union with God. Hard necessity drove Margaret to work from her twelfth to her fortieth year. She was sent from the orphanage in Somers Town, where she went on the death of her father, because those in charge there had a quite erroneous notion that she had friends and relatives who would take care of her. She was given shelter first by

Madame Caulier who took her as a maid. Then she became house-keeper and later nurse to Doctor Morgan. Finally she served as nurse and servant to his married daughter, Mrs Thompson, both in England and in Belgium.

Roughly speaking, two thirds of the lives of both Saint Catherine and Margaret were spent in preparation, in the case of Saint Catherine, for ten years of what might be called high politics as ambassador and adviser of the Pope; in the case of Mother Margaret, for twenty four years spent in preparation for and inauguration of the English Congregation of Saint Catherine of Siena. Though of course there can be no comparison between Saint Catherine's field of labour and Mother Margaret's, in both cases the preparation was the same: years spent in deepening the interior life and allowing God to penetrate by his love into the very depths of the soul.

The reason is obvious. No one can lead others unless he first treads the way himself. An apostolic life must rest on the bedrock of contemplation, for no one can pass on the fruits of contemplation unless he has himself first learnt to contemplate. But if by contemplation the soul is first rooted in charity—the love of God—it does not matter in what diverse ways this charity shows itself.

Once, speaking of Saint Catherine, Mother Margaret said: 'Her one spirit was love, humility and sacrifice. There is no love where there is no sacrifice, and her whole life is an example of this. Let us imitate her, for all can do it. It needs not health or strength, but it needs the *will*. We are what our will is, and we are only masters of that, and none can will or not will for us, therefore our perfection is in our own hands, and we shall be judged accordingly'.

Father Austin Maltus, a Dominican who knew Mother Margaret well, writes of her . . . 'As the salvation of the world was only given by our Lord meriting this by his course of dire suffering and death, so all his great servants, who have had great works to found for the sanctification and salvation of souls, had to receive a greater plenitude of our Lord's suffering, first to purify them and then that they might receive the reward of merit necessary for perfecting their work.

'Her great mother Saint Catherine of Siena was perfected by suffering in the proportion necessary to raise her to the measure of the purity of divine Love, that she might merit the great graces then and since necessary for the exigencies of the Church and especially for the salvation of innumerable souls. There is a great similarity between the mother and the daughter in their spirit, life and suffering, with that

difference in degree of perfection and variety of formation which God gave to each according to his designs. Mother Margaret required a strong and powerful nature to bear the labours of founding, raising and doing a great work as she has done. And this gift of great physical power and energy, notwithstanding her infirmities, was best suited for our age—an age of flesh and decay of faith. Whereas in the time of Saint Catherine, though there was laxity in morals and great political emotions occasioning great evils, yet there was not the same measure of decay of faith, and hence the frailer body of Saint Catherine served better to display more vividly the supernatural gifts of God in her before a people who had eyes of faith to see and to be moved by the sight. Mother Margaret's type is best for our times, in which a good God has contrived to combine Saint Catherine's gifts with a powerfully formed frame.

'And yet, after this physique had served Mother Margaret for her work and even for her sanctification during a long life, the body and its exquisite nervous organisation was made use of in her long illness to serve as an instrument to raise her to that degree of similarity with her Mother that the comparison is just and appropriate'.

Archbishop Ullathorne, who knew her perhaps better than any one, also says of her: 'She had much of Saint Catherine's way of looking at the great destiny of souls, much of her vehement love for souls, much of her way of living in the Church and for the Church, much of her habit of taking an interest in and praying for those who rule and govern the Church, and especially was she like Saint Catherine in that she sought to know God in herself and herself in God . . .'

In Margaret, as in Saint Catherine, there was an intense love of the Church. 'The Church is none other than Christ Himself', Catherine tells Nicholas Soderini. And again in a letter to the magistrates of Lucca she writes: 'I entreat you then, my dear brothers, all of you children of holy Church, be firm and constant in what you have done . . . Keep faithful to him who alone is strong; and have no fellowship with those dead members who have separated themselves from the source of strength'.

Mother Margaret once told a religious: 'Let all who have to do with children instil into them a great love of holy Church. Do not use half measures yourselves; be bold and open in your profession of loyalty to the Church; let us have no compromises'.

A prayer of Saint Catherine's uttered while she was in ecstasy and written down by the papal notary who was present, proves her devo-

tion to the Vicar of Christ. 'O ineffable Deity! I am all sin and unworthy to address thee, but thou canst make me worthy. O Lord punish my sins and regard not my miseries. I have one body and to thee I give it; behold my blood; behold my flesh; destroy it, annihilate it, separate it bone from bone, for the sake of those for whom I pray. If it be thy will, cause my bones and my very marrow to be ground to pieces for thy Vicar on earth, the bridegroom of thy spouse, for whom I pray; that thou will deign to hear me, and that he, thy Vicar, may both know thy will and love it, and perform it, to the end that we may not perish'.

After visiting Rome on business concerned with the papal approval of her Constitutions, Mother Margaret once said: 'I am afraid of saying what I really feel about the pope, lest I should scandalise people. I wanted to kneel there (in Saint Peter's in Rome) and look at him for hours. There was all that was most great and powerful upon earth—the man before whom all things are as nothing! And when I heard him sing mass I cannot express what I felt; it was the god of the earth prostrate in adoration before the God of heaven!'

Both were alike in the love of the Order to which they belonged. Saint Catherine describes the glorious Father Saint Dominic guiding the ship of his Order and 'desiring that his sons should seek no other thing than the glory of God and the salvation of souls . . . And he made his Order a royal Order, large, joyous and odoriferous, as a delightful garden'.

Mother Margaret said: 'The feeling I have of belonging to the Order has been planted there by God deep down in my soul . . . This is not the thought of a day, nor is it an affection for any individual belonging to the Order, but it was innate in my soul many years before coming to England; so it must have been put there by God. I did not choose the Dominican Order, but God in his mercy and for his own wise reasons forced me into it and I have reason to bless Him for it'.

In both devotion was simple, straightforward and free. In her last testament to her children, Saint Catherine says on this subject: that 'God had shown her that none can ever arrive at perfection, nor acquire true virtue save by means of humble, faithful and continual prayer, which she said is the mother that conceives and nourishes all true virtues in the soul; and without it all languish and fade away. To which prayer she exhorted us most earnestly to apply ourselves, declaring that there were two kinds thereof, namely, vocal and mental prayer. To vocal prayer, she said, we should attend at the appointed hours; but to

mental prayer continually, striving always to know ourselves and God's great goodness to us'.

Of Mother Margaret, Archbishop Ullathorne wrote: 'God alone! This was the first of her principles both in contemplation and action. There is nothing like prayer. This was a second and necessary consequence of the first. You cannot truly love God without loving souls. This was the third principle which completed the circle of her wisdom. And God alone, God as present within the soul, God as there communing with her, God as there illuminating her way, as there inspiring her with His eternal love, and His divine will, God as the centre and spring of virtue, this great and glorious God, so near her heart, was the one sovereign object of attraction to Mother Margaret's soul, was the one motive and reason of her inner life and outward conduct'.

Our Lord himself kindled the love of souls in Saint Catherine's heart by showing her the beauty of a soul in a state of grace. 'How sayst thou, daughter, is not this a fair and beautiful soul which through thy care has been recovered from the hands of the enemy? What man or woman would refuse to suffer somewhat for the winning of so noble a creature? If I, the Sovereign Beauty, was nevertheless so overcome by the love and beauty of a man's soul that I refused not to come down from heaven and to suffer labour and reproaches for many years, and in the end to shed my blood for his redemption, how much more ought you to labour one for another, and do what in you lyeth for the recovery of a soul?'

In a Christmas letter to her daughters, Mother Margaret speaks in much the same terms. 'It is a great condescension of our dear Lord to employ us in the same work he came to accomplish—the salvation of souls . . . If we love God, we must love souls and work for them too as our Lord did. It requires sacrifice, and of this he gave one continual example. He lived a life of continual sacrifices and died a sacrifice of love for souls on the altar of the Cross. This must animate us to work and to suffer. It is all very well to be fine in our words, and to speak of the good of saving souls, but this will not save us . . . We must work and suffer, pray and love, and do all we can, with our dear hidden Lord to help us, to save souls'.

Both Saint Catherine and Mother Margaret died as victims for the salvation of souls. Saint Catherine, as befitted the greater, offered herself for Rome and the end of the schism. Mother Margaret, in her lesser degree, but still wholly selflessly, said herself that she was suffering for her youngest and best loved convent in the slums at Bow Road;

but in truth she was a victim for her whole congregation with its five convents.

In both cases the last words that those standing round heard the dying woman say aloud were: 'Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit'.

Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini¹

J. H. WHITFIELD

And how should Aeneas Sylvius not be the first to beckon? When on the opening page of that bulky folio (Bâle 1551) there is a formula so close to us: that one should be grown up at twenty, prudent at thirty, rich at forty? Measure that formula against Dante, or even Petrarch (whom it might fit, yet who could not have uttered it), and you will see why Aeneas Sylvius claims kinship forward, more than back. The quality of his mind was also therefore sceptical, as witness that little anecdote on Scotland. 'I had heard once there was a tree in Scotland which growing on the river bank produced fruits in the shape of ducklings; and these when they reach maturity fall of their own accord, some on the land, some in the water; and those that fall on the ground rot, but those falling in the water soon come to life and straight away fly up into the air with wings and feathers. But when I eagerly investigated this thing I learnt that miracles flee ever farther off, and that the famous tree was not in Scotland but in the islands of the Arcades.' You see by that how far he set his foot. But his eye goes even further. His *Cosmography* was never finished, his *Asia* was limited, on the whole, to Asia Minor; though it ends with the eager note of discovery: 'if life is given me I have decreed to cover the site and peoples of the world'. And already, despite the limitations of his *Asia*, his gaze extends to the Irrawaddy and Peking; while in our north he for the first time enters the Baltic on the map, which none of the ancients knew. And elsewhere offers *unknown land* to the appetite of the Quattrocento, with affirmation of the circumnavigability of Africa as far as the Arabian Gulf and

¹A lecture given to the Society for Italian Studies. Pope Pius II canonized St Catherine.

India. He knows the white elephant and the virtues of rhinoceros horn, though he is unwilling to be taken in by tales of rivers larger than the Ganges, or rulers with ten thousand elephants trained to war.

We may take this as a proof that humanism, with Aeneas Sylvius, is nurtured in the past, but looks with an open eye upon the world that is, and will be. In fact, if I may amuse you for a moment, his description of Vienna might even bring us up to date. I spare you all the detail of its easy ways; but listen to this, and note particularly the close: 'Rich merchants dropping with old age marry girls, and quickly leave them widows. These find young men as husbands from their household, having often had with them adulterous custom; so that he who yesterday was poor, today turns out rich. And these then surviving take other wives, and so the thing goes in a round'. *Resque per circulum ducitur*: would it not be a pretty matter if the invention of *La Ronde* was traced right back to Pope Pius II? Or else you might like that first suggestion of impatience with German pedantry, in the same description of Vienna. There is a not unfamous theologian, Thomas Haselbach, 'whose learning I would praise, had he not lectured two and twenty years on the first chapter of *Isaiah*, and not yet reached the end'. Here in a humorous way we may feel that Aeneas Sylvius's world is close to ours. At other moments we may feel proximity in a more tragic way. Witness one passage in the *Commentaries* which looks to that danger to whose combating he gave his energies during the short years of his papacy. 'If Hungary yields to the Turks, the door is open to them into Germany and Italy, and their strength is nearly doubled . . . The Turks aspire to the empire of the west, we must meet them while they can be conquered; and before they subject the Hungarians to themselves'. I hardly need to transpose that in modern terms. Nor is that all that Pius II saw out of the end of the telescope. In his great account of Germany he noted its abundance in all manners of arms, and especially the new weapons of artillery; and yet the Empire now not what it was with Charlemagne. Partly, it is that Germany's too rich to take its arms abroad; but there is another, bigger, reason: in disunity. You confess your Emperor is great, but you obey him just as much as you like, and you like to obey him very little. 'They must learn to serve their prince who wish to rule over others: and if you Germans obeyed your Kaiser Frederick as your ancestors obeyed Charlemagne, there is no doubt your former glory would return . . . If you did this, there is no doubt but that, recovering your former reputation, you would impose your rule on many and great peoples'.

If before it was Stalin, this time it is Bismarck, and Hitler, who are caught in the lens. Nor is that the only way, perhaps, in which the latter is foreshadowed. Let us go slightly round the corner to the point. For in that attenuation of the Empire in the Quattrocento you will have scented, rightly, a break with the political thought of Dante. Certainly here (even if unconsciously, for though Pius II is not without a generous word of praise for Dante's noble poem, Dante is not a constituent in his thought) Aeneas Sylvius is explicit in rejection. 'The dignity of the empire is diminished, till even counts barely nod their head, where formerly the greatest kings bent to the ground. *Sed est omnium potestatum finis*, nor, what Virgil thought, was the Roman Empire given without end, which instead seems now so sick, that it needs think more of the grave than of a doctor'. Now the vacuum which he posits at this point we shall find Pius II filling by appeal to the principle of authority; but by the side of that there is a disillusioned look to the surface of history. And we may find ourselves hesitant over the resolution of a contradiction, to which we shall, inevitably, return. But meanwhile, what principle appears to take the place of providential empire? It is the most humanistic of all contributions. 'For it is most honourable to excel among men in that particular by which men themselves excel all other animals. Eloquence is a great thing, and if we would tell the truth, there is nothing which rules the world so much as eloquence. For whatever we do in the state we do persuaded by words, and his opinion lasts with the people who has known best how to persuade them'. As I have hinted, we may find it hard to see a unity in the personality and thought of Pius II; but here for the first time, so far as I know, we can look straight down the avenue of history to Khrushchev or Kennedy. For at this point feudalism and imperial right are both discarded, and democracy with its dangers signposted: for as Machiavelli said in his *Discorsi* somewhat later, it is always easier for the heady oratory of Mr Bevan to persuade than for the sober tones of Mr Gaitskell.

In the year that Magdalen College was founded, Aeneas Sylvius was elected Pope, and fourteen years before he had written what a German scholar called *das gelesenste Werk Enea's*, a long short story with the simple title *Historia de duobus amantibus*. Therein you will see a conflict, which he himself summed up in the famous phrase by which the pope renounced the hedonism of the scholar's youth: *Pium tenete, Aeneam respuite*. That has the advantage of being authentic, unlike the apocryphal, *Let us enjoy the papacy now we've got it*; but it is only fair to tell you

that the revision has not always been accepted. That same German, who wrote a century ago the most extensive study of Pius II, was stern in his censure: Pius II was astute and ambitious, bent on material advancement for himself, *in seinem ganzen Leben nur durch irdische Interessen geleitet*. For a long time that pronouncement of Voigt held writ, now we may discount it. But obviously in so doing we do not come to unity. Yet the contradictions we may find cannot lessen his importance for us, and may perchance enhance it; and in a brilliant moment of Italian intellectual life his range, though wholly different, is no less astonishing than is Alberti's.

The basis of his whole career is humanistic. Early among his letters there is one to his nephew Antony, on the report he has no wish to study: *Quid ergo tu miser studia despicias literarum, qui pauper es, qui nisi per magnam virtutem evadere in virum clarum non potes?* In that the success-story of Aeneas himself is clearly shown. The Piccolomini were noble, but decayed to poverty, and it is the triumph of his own intelligence which brings the rise out of obscurity. And in the treatise *De Liberiorum Educatione*, written for the young Ladislas, the future King of Bohemia, Aeneas Sylvius wrote what might be the proud watchword of humanism, *SINE LITERIS OMNIS AETAS CAECA EST*. But once again, to show that this is no impractical concern with the antique past, he is there also the first upholder of the study of modern languages; and in his letter to Duke Sigismund of the Tyrol (which also is a treatise on education) he adds that what one has learnt from literature is to be of profit in life itself. 'Nor do I praise those men who so give themselves to literature that they think little of other things'. *Illi sunt omni laude & praeconio digni, qui & reipublicae servierunt, & literatum studia non omiserunt*. Such was the pattern for himself, from the moment when a passing cardinal took him as secretary from Siena, at the age of twenty six, to the distant Council of Bâle. It was in the sequel, three years later, as secretary to another cardinal, that he came to Scotland with a mission to James I. At Calais he found it difficult to go forwards or backwards, till the Cardinal of Winchester gave him letters to the English King, and so he came to London, *populosas ditissimasque Lundonias*, saw the noble temple of St Paul, the royal tombs, *pontemque instar urbis*, and what is beyond compare, the golden shrine of St Thomas of Canterbury, covered with diamonds, pearls and carbuncles, at which 'they think it wrong to offer anything cheaper than silver' (*ad quod materiam argento viliores nefas offerre ducunt*). By which you will see that the principle of the silver collection is of some antiquity. But the English

feared he had a secret mission, and back he went to Bruges to take ship from Flanders over the stormy seas. I omit the tempest which took them near to Norway, and in despair of all, but in the end they made the land, and Aeneas Sylvius a pilgrimage of ten miles barefoot to the nearest church at Whitekirk. When he had rested two hours he found no movement in his frozen feet, and only the necessity of finding food, of which none was there, forced activity, and brought warmth. But on this ordeal he blamed the gout which nearly cost him the papacy. From James I he obtained some favour, his expenses were defrayed, and fifty nobles added with two horses as a present. The poverty of the land, however, did not escape him, nor that the greatest pleasure to a Scottish ear lay in abuse of Englishmen. When the time came for return, and the same shipmaster offered passage, his courage failed him, and he preferred, disguised as a merchant, to travel overland. Even so he found himself a traveller in a land where strangers were looked on as men of Ind or Ethiops, and where wine and white bread were unknown. Moreover, at nightfall, all the men retired to a distant tower, for fear of the Scots, leaving Aeneas alone with two servants and the hundred women of the local population, *nihil enim his mali facturos hostes credunt, qui stuprum inter mala non ducunt*. In spite of night alarms he came to Newcastle, which seemed to him the first glimpse of returning civilisation, the first inhabitable part, for Scotland, and that part of England which is next to Scotland, 'has nothing like our habitation'. At Durham he saw the tomb of Bede; at York, a great and populous town, a church worthy of note in all the world for its size and workmanship, and a chapel full of light with walls of glass and slender columns in between: one of those northern experiences he remembered in the building of the Duomo at Pienza. As he rode he made acquaintance with an English judge, bound to London for the assizes, who told him what was going on at Arras, as to one who knew nothing of its affairs. And added curses for the Cardinal of Santa Croce, Aeneas's patron, as a wolf in the clothing of a sheep. A pretty irony, wrote Aeneas, that this judge brought him safe to London, who, had he known his man, would soon have thrown him into prison. In London he found a royal interdict, by which no foreigner could leave the island without royal letters, which he did not dare to ask. So he corrupted the guardians of the port of Dover with his Scottish nobles, an easy task with such a class of men, *quibus nihil est auro dulcius*.

So he came back to the Council of Bâle, and played an important part in its proceedings, and raised his voice, in the struggle between

Eugenius IV and the Council, for the democratic principle of conciliar superiority to the Pope. The king always less than the kingdom, Christ came to minister, not to be ministered unto, the right of the Church in general Council to depose a pope . . . It is from such positions that he will make the most specific retractation. But meanwhile, this democratic theory takes him on, when the Council deposes Eugenius, to be secretary to Amadeus of Savoy, its antipope. And this is the bridge that sent him into Germany, on a mission from Felix V to the Emperor Frederick III at Frankfurt in 1442. The emperor crowned him as poet, offered to take him into his service: enough to tempt him to believe, after the atmosphere of theological disputes and juridical contests, that here he could live *sibi et Musis*. Thus, for a short while, since Felix was unwilling to release him, he was at the same time secretary of an antipope and of an emperor. Naturally, his new hopes were not fulfilled quite as he thought. His position as an intruder was precarious, as a dependant, humiliating and uncomfortable. It was only with the coming of the Imperial Chancellor, Gaspar Schlick (son of an Italian mother) that his position became assured. And we might put here what he wrote in another context to this friend and patron: *Non enim ut volumus, sed ut possumus vivendum est. Coaptanda est tempori vita nostra*. Which, in another key, anticipates by a century the conclusion of Montaigne in his last essay: *Nostre grand et glorieux chef-d'oeuvre c'est vivre à propos*. And by adaptation, though he hankered to see the German Aeneas become Italian again (a thing not to happen for fifteen years), he found some prosperity and some influence. We may take as indicative of the latter, and of a changing attitude, what he says himself in the *Commentaries* about the moment of accession of the aged Calixtus III in 1455. Many in Austria urged on Frederick that now was the time to coerce the holy see, to win freedom for Germany by shaking off the yoke, and denouncing the conventions made with Eugenius IV. But Aeneas replied that it was not to Casesar's purpose to diminish the authority of the Roman pontiff in order to win the favour of the people, inconstant in its nature; nor should one loose the reins to the multitude, hostile to rulers; between princes sometimes friendship is possible, *inter plebem, & regem odium immortale*: the Pope needs the help of the Emperor, the Emperor that of the Pope. And here there is clearly formulated that alliance between the altar and the throne, which will last in Europe until the future Pius VII preached his sermon of 1796, and found surprisingly democracy sanctioned in the Gospel. By then he had already renounced, at the Pope's feet, his earlier doctrine of conciliar

supremacy; and in a way he will never again renounce this principle of authority. Yet some of his most significant observations suit uneasily with it.

It is here that we can look to a work which has an English interest. For Alexander Barclay, priest and monk of Ely, who wrote the first English eclogues about 1514, in putting into them the 'miseryes of Courtiers and Courts of all Princes in generall' stated that these were 'gathered out of a Booke named in Latin *Miseriae Curialium*, compiled by Eneas Sylvius, Poet and Oratour'. And here we may expect to find the observations which undermine, rather than those which support, authority. And they are of a radical importance which anticipates the repudiation, by Guicciardini or Machiavelli, of the principle of legitimate sovereignty. 'For you will find today scarcely any rule which was not born or continued by a cheat'; as for the liberality of princes, there are few who give, and what they give is only what they've taken; here the cause of the poor is never defended, justice is venal, speech always shameless, mercy, religious zeal, or charity is lacking, only envy and ambition rules. . . . No wonder the conclusion is, shun the court and flee to private life. Nor will you be surprised at the anecdote which he tells elsewhere, of the Franciscan preacher at Vienna who noticed that the Emperor Albert was asleep, and who asked the congregation in a loud voice, if princes could be saved? And when he had shown it to be a dubious and very difficult matter, he added, 'Come, there is hope, for if they have been baptised, and die in their cradles, we need not despair entirely of their salvation'.

I shall come back to this matter of political reflection. But let us look another way. In the letter where he hoped not to spend all his life outside Italy he said as well: 'I have been so far careful not to involve myself in holy orders. For I fear continence, which though it is to be praised is more probable in words than in fact, and is more fitting for philosophers than it is for poets'. Now in the *obiter dicta* with which Platina ends his life of Pius II you will find one which touches on a controversy not yet wholly dead: *Sacerdotibus magna ratione sublatis nuptias, maiori restituendas videri*. And alongside that we may place an episode which antedates his entry into the imperial service, since it goes back to 1441. This brief encounter you will find commemorated in a letter which he sent to his father (Ep. 15, ed. 1551). 'You write, father, that you are uncertain whether to be glad or sorry that the Lord has given me offspring. But I see cause for joy, not sorrow. What is there sweeter than to produce one's kind . . . so that another little Aeneas may play around

you. . . . But perhaps you mean that you are sorry for my crime, and that the child is born in sin. I do not know what opinion you have of me. Certainly you did not give birth to a son of stone or iron, when you yourself are flesh . . . I confess that I have erred, and am not holier than David, nor wiser than Solomon. This is an ancient and inveterate sin, nor do I know who is without it'. He adds the anecdote, how not two years ago at Strasbourg he met a woman coming from England (she has been taken to be English), staying in the same hostelry as himself, neither unlovely, nor advanced in years. She spoke to him in Italian, a language she knew well, which pleased him more . . . In short, he pressed, and she resisted. On the eve of her departure, he begged her not to bolt her door, and she denied him any hope. But when silence had descended, he tried his luck: the door was shut, but it was not fastened . . . Her name was Elizabeth. And hence the boy which he sent home with the letter to its grandparents.

I have quoted from that more extensively than I should, perhaps, have done, for it has always seemed to me one of the most engaging of his letters. By compensation I may quote less than I should from the two literary documents of this same category. Both of them belong to one year, 1444, but their destiny has been curiously opposite. The *Story of Two Lovers*, the most-read work of Aeneas, was printed, reprinted, and translated. The Plautine comedy called *Chrysis* has been preserved in a single ms. at Prague, to be printed once only 500 years after its composition, in 1941. Perhaps that was as well for Pius II's reputation, and I had better only say that if the full affirmation of the themes of women and wine is to your liking, here is a learned, and bawdy, trifle which might engage attention, and which reflects, as well as Plautus, something of the atmosphere in which the pleasure-loving secretaries of Frederick moved. The *Story of Two Lovers*, Euryalus and Lucretia, has also been taken, in spite of the classical names, as being an adventure of the Gaspar Schlick whose importance for Aeneas's career we have seen. There is alleged to be—amongst the many—a Venetian edition whose title page shows Pius II relating the story to the assembled College of Cardinals. That is an unlikely picture, and Pius, indeed, specifically abjured the novella. But compared with the comedy *Chrysis*, if not a chaste, it is a moving story. Euryalus, the handsome, powerful young German in the entourage of the Emperor Sigismund, sees in Siena the young matron Lucretia, married unworthily. Their flame is mutual, though they do not know it, and she is jealously guarded (her husband Menelaus). I leave out the vicissitudes, the rapture snatched,

the final pining and death of Lucretia, to find round one character the reflection we have found elsewhere. For here is a Pandalus, brother-in-law to Lucretia, and to his help finally Euryalus makes resort, with proffers of friendship and of gratitude. I leave out the casuistry on no heart except of flesh, for the kernel is Euryalus's offer to make Pandalus a County Palatine, so that all his posterity should enjoy the title. Pandalus does not despise the title, no of course, but he would rather (or so he says) have done this if it were possible for Euryalus without Euryalus knowing, and he does not put such a reward as a condition of his help. And in this spectacle of Pandalus hiding his greed for a title to be earned by pandering, Aeneas's reflections flare into seriousness: 'This man has gained a County as his reward for pandering, and his posterity will show the golden diploma of his nobility. In nobility there are many degrees, my friend, and indeed if we looked to the origin of whom you will, I think, you would find no noble house, or very few, with an unblemished origin'. And he proceeds to the taint of wealth, wealth which is the precursor of nobility: No one makes a big bundle unless he cuts all the plants; men amass great riches, nor do they mind whence they come, but that they come abundantly, and all approve this saying: Whence you have them no one asks, but you must have them. And when the coffer's full, then nobility is asked for, *quae sic quaesita nihil est aliud quam praemium indignitatis*. The reward of unworthiness: like the other, on rule, this is uncompromising language, and its congruence lends it strength. In spite of his conversion to the principle of authority, there is an afterthought which remains as strong as the principle. And here perhaps is the time to come back to this matter of political reflection. No discovery has had greater fortune in modern criticism than that of Croce that Machiavelli was the first who saw the autonomy of politics, their being amoral. It is not my business now to tell you that I think this discovery meaningless when you apply it to Machiavelli, but if I add a couple of observations of Pius II you will see, I hope, that there was no need to wait for Machiavelli. In the *Commentaries* Pius observed of Sigismondo Malatesta, who being defeated, yet sought the application of an alliance made with the Prince of Taranto: *Sed nulla victo foedera prosunt: pacta cum sorte ipsa resolvuntur*. And at the end of the *History of Bohemia* comes a double comment on the death of his pupil Ladislav King of Bohemia at the untimely age of eighteen, so that both Hungary and Bohemia passed to men of low degree. 'So it pleased God, of old they would have said it was the play of Fortune. But we attribute all to divine providence. Some cast aspersions on the

election of either king, saying force was used, and that what fear extorted has no legality. We are persuaded that kingdoms are won by arms, and not by laws. *Nobis persuasum est, armis acquiri regna, non legibus*. I leave to you the reconciliation of the remark on providence: but is it not plain that one who speaks this language knows all that can be known of the scission between politics and morals?

And as for realism, just over fifty years after Aeneas Sylvius Machiavelli gave a short idealised account of Germany, seeing it through the spectacles of Caesar and of Tacitus, whereas Aeneas Sylvius, in the long *Apologia* to Martin Meyr, recently reprinted with the significant title *Germania*, throws brilliant light upon a scene known at first hand for fifteen years. Here for the first time Strasburg equals Venice, Prague is no less noble than is Florence. Reluctantly, I turn away from this, for sake of time, and offer you instead an anecdote which may point us a new way. When Pope, Pius raised Orlando a Florentine, a hearer of cases in the Sacred Palace, to the bishopric. He had been always poor, though learned, and a holder on to justice. And though he had hoped well of Pius, yet he had never coveted any bishopric, thinking himself happy enough if he earned 300 gold coins a year in minor dignities. But when he was informed that the bishopric of Florence had been given him, he began to be foolish in the manner of men, who never reach so high a grade that they do not seek a higher one, and are then most wretched when they seem most successful. Orlando thought that a bishopric could not have come so easily and so un hoped for, without a cardinalate coming far more easily. . . The wretched man became so wedded to this hope, that he never saw a messenger coming to him from the Curia but that he thought he came with the hat for himself, and then when cardinals were created afterwards, and he learnt no mention had been made of himself, he was so stricken with grief (he who had wept tears of joyful surprise upon his nomination as Bishop of Florence) that he fell ill and died.

You will realise that I have not really stepped aside, for where Orlando's hopes failed him, Aeneas Sylvius's succeeded with a speed that may seem phenomenal. He took the first orders in 1446, by 1457 he was a cardinal (after being successively Bishop of Trieste and of Florence), and in the Conclave of 1458 he was elected Pope as Pius II. You will find in his *Commentaries*—the first great autobiography of modern European literature—a modest account of the circumstances of the conclave, and you can find it, quite recognisably the same, but more highly coloured and more circumstantial elsewhere. I shall omit all

but the culminating point. The opposition to the Cardinal of Siena had accused him of being poor, gouty, a poet and a humanist; and a strong faction had formed for the French Cardinal of Rouen. Had it not been for the eloquence of Aeneas, who won back some of those who had given their word because they feared the hostility of a pope who seemed assured of election if they did not side with the majority, Rouen's elevation was a *fait accompli*. But Aeneas Sylvius reacted, and the voting in the scrutiny gave him nine votes and Rouen six, with twelve votes needed for a two-thirds majority and valid election. At this juncture all sat waiting for the possibility of accessions, that is the individual transference of votes. All sat in silence, pale, as though beside themselves; none dared speak or move their lips, or even any other part of their person, except their eyes, which they now turned this way, now that. Then the Vice-Chancellor Roderick (who was, as you may realise, nephew of Calixtus III, the Spanish Pope, by name Rodrigo Borja, later to make his niche in history as Alexander VI) getting up, said 'I accede to Aeneas', words which seemed a stab to the heart of the Cardinal of Rouen, who turned pale as death. After this there was another silence, each looking at the other's face, showing by signs the passions and affections of their minds; already they seemed to see Aeneas elected Pope, and some, foreseeing this, went out in order to avoid the bad fortune of that day, with the excuse of needing to leave the room; but not being followed by the others, they immediately came back again. Then James, Cardinal of Sant Anastasia, said: 'And I too accede to the Cardinal of Siena'. All once more remained astonished and bewildered, losing the power of speech; there was now only one vote needed for Aeneas, for twelve votes were wanted for the election of the Pope. Cardinal Prospero Colonna wanted to acquire the glory of proclaiming by himself the Pope, and rising to his feet wanted in the usual way to give his vote with gravity, but in the midst of doing so he was embraced on either side by the Cardinals Bessarion and Rouen, and by them rebuked seriously for wishing to side with Aeneas; but when he remained firm in his purpose they tried by main force to take him from his place, the one holding his right arm, the other his left; but Prospero Colonna, paying no heed to their words (though he had given his vote to the Cardinal of Rouen), yet since he had an ancient friendship with Aeneas, turning to the other cardinals, 'And I', he said, 'accede to Cardinal Aeneas, and make him Pope'. And when they heard this, the sails of the adversaries flopped, and all the cardinals, without wasting time, threw themselves at the feet of Aeneas, and saluted him as Pope.

Pium tenete, Aeneam respuite. The six years from 1458 to 1464 saw an admirable unity of purpose in a pope often nearly incapacitated by his infirmities. You will have noted the significance of the dates: the pre-occupation of Pius II was to stem the advance of the Turk, to pacify Christendom as a preliminary for a crusade. To achieve this purpose he called the representatives of the princes of Europe to Mantua, and to this idea he at length gave his life when the effort and the disappointment of his rendezvous at Ancona proved too much, and he died there in 1464. What was typical was the outcome of a plenary indulgence in Germany for those who took arms against the Turk: those who collected together were more of the faithful than an army. They were poor and unarmed, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The rich and powerful, caught in the pleasures of this world, take little thought for the things of the next one. Of this purpose, in a different way, the noblest document is Pius's famous letter to Mahomet II, the 396th of the Bâle edition. If he could not rouse Europe, might he not by force of eloquence win Mahomet? Hence this appeal of 1461 or 1462, which rings with a fine idealism. The peoples of Europe are more than the Turk can overflow, he who has been held on the Danube for seventy years, and among peoples where Caesar came and saw and conquered. But there is another way to spread Mahomet's empire among the Christians, and to make his name glorious; and for this neither gold, nor arms, nor armies nor fleets are needed. A little thing can make him the greatest, the most powerful and the most famous of all now living. You ask what it may be? It is a little water for baptism, acceptance of the Christian creed, and belief in the gospel. Pius enumerates the examples: Constantine and Clovis, Stephen of Hungary . . . and then proceeds to an exposition of Christian principles, with a rebuttal of Mahometan ones. And it is here that we may find the most specific repudiation of the sensuality of the period of his comedy *Chrysis*. For there are no Mahomedan delights in paradise, nor does he care for carnal desires who enjoys spiritual goods. On the one side, Pius was right in his judgment: the headway of the Turks was over, though the threat remained uncomfortably close. But Mahomet knew no Latin, and if he could have understood the language of Pius there might have been no need to send the letter. It was like sending Stalin a treatise on the English way of life: if he could understand it he would have been already the cricket captain in the Anglo-Soviet Test.

You may feel that this noble hope diminishes somewhat the claims that I have made before for Aeneas's realism; and I should like to go

back to some of those antiseptic judgments on power and rule. And I shall think wistfully too of the descriptive passages in the *Commentaries*, descriptions of natural scenery that have been called the most moving before Rousseau. But you will find them freely quoted from in Burckhardt's chapter on the *Discovery of Natural Beauty*; and I shall only add here, for reasons you will guess, that Aeneas Sylvius is the first to see the broom flowering upon the hills. Outside Viterbo he climbed up by pleasant ways, *in quibus cum genestae ingens vis est, eaque florida, crocea magna pars agri videatur* (where there was a vast amount of broom, and that in flower, so that a great part of the country showed up yellow). And then again elsewhere he climbed and looked upon the whole prospect of the Tyrrhenian coast belonging to the Church; and here also, *maxime vero genesta placuit, quae flore suo magnam cooperuit camporum partem*. Nor, since the date is what it is, can I refrain from telling you that Aeneas Sylvius is the first author, so far as a I know, to record the custom of giving Christmas presents: *nunc praesertim quando Salvatoris nostri natalitia celebramus, in quibus mos est fidelibus Christianis invicem munera missitare*. But to that, lest you should think this Christmas present is too long, I shall only add one detail. It comes when Pius II was visiting the monastery of Santa Maria Palazzuolo. 'Before you enter the monastery there is a high rock like a wall on the left hand, in which the fasces of the Roman consuls, and twelve axes had been carved according to the ancient custom. Six the ivy had covered, six were still visible. Pius, kindly to the memory of antiquity, ordered the ivy to be removed. *Pius hederam iussit amoveri antiquitatis memoriae favens*. It is a subject which gave rise to one of the most pleasing of Piranesi's Views of Rome, which I would have liked to bring with me. But you will see, I think, why I have quoted it, and I hope that you will think of me as acting to the memory of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini as he to the memory of antiquity. From over an old, and pleasing, author I have taken a little ivy, and if you now will gaze yourselves you will find pleasures of your own.

Reviews

THE THEOLOGY OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER. By John D. Godsey; S.C.M. Press, 25s.

The name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is becoming increasingly widely coupled with that of other great theologians of the twentieth century, notably with that of Karl Barth. The number of studies devoted to Bonhoeffer is growing steadily; Mr Godsey has assembled an impressive list of them in his (by no means complete) bibliography. The time has clearly come for Bonhoeffer to rise from his martyr's grave to new life in the pages and footnotes of doctoral theses. Not that Mr Godsey's book is in any way typical of this *genre*; it is far too clear, too readable, notwithstanding his scholarly thoroughness and the somewhat scholastic style of his divisions and subdivisions. The exposition appears to be both complete, balanced and occasionally penetrating. And yet, there is something elusively and curiously unconvincing and artificial about it. The reason for this is not that Mr Godsey's book is inadequate to its subject. It is rather that its subject does not lend itself to academic treatment of this kind; or, at any rate, that Bonhoeffer does not lend himself to academic treatment without being removed from the dimension in which his greatness lies.

Even the most theological of his writings are unmistakably a personal testimony. They are born from the need to re-examine the foundations of his hope and faith in the face of the widespread readiness of Christians to come to terms with the 'world'—in Bonhoeffer's case, with the world of Hitler's Germany. His death in the concentration camp at Flossenbürg in 1945 clinched a career to which, in retrospect, it seemed the logical conclusion. His theological writings are woven closely into the fabric of his life. They are always the concrete, personal reflections of a man living through trial and crisis, both shaping his response to his experience and being shaped by it. In them we encounter a man in search of the 'wholeness' required of a Christian, a wholeness which is perhaps one of the most distinctive and most fundamental conceptions of his theology. To consider the theology in abstraction from the life is inevitably to do it grave injustice; for Bonhoeffer was not great enough as a theologian to justify such treatment, and he was too great a man in other ways to be caught in the meshes of so scholarly and abstract a net.

R. A. MARKUS

THE EUCHARIST IN CATHOLIC LIFE. By Lawrence G. Lovasik, S.V.D.; New York—The Macmillan Company; 3 is. 6d.

The publishers announce that 'At once a compendium of information and a devotional manual, this unusual book is a complete guide to all that is known on the great Sacrament of the Eucharist'; no wonder we find the dedication is to

Jesus Christ. It was predictable that the emphasis would lean to edification, and with this end in view Fr Lovasik writes with stolid earnestness and frequent recourse to his *Treasury of Catechism Stories*. The readers he has in mind are presumably nuns, especially teaching nuns, and they will of course find much material here. But in such a book over-simplified statements can foster common misapprehensions, and we will dwell on three examples. First, reception of the sacraments is absolutely necessary to salvation: true as this is for most of us Catholics, God does not demand the impossible, and where there is no possibility of actually doing so a genuine desire is sufficient; in the case of those many millions who through no fault of their own are unaware of the sacraments they will *eo ipso* not be aware of desire for them; nevertheless this desire is implicit where there is real concern to do good, and will gain them the same grace the sacraments betoken and confer. Second, the sacraments, and grace itself, are said to be medicinal: yet that is only the preliminary aspect of our calling to be 'sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint-heirs with Christ'. Third, there is the same thoughtless disjunction between Eucharist as sacrament and as sacrifice that is so often found; yet its *raison d'être* as sacrament is precisely to be sacrifice; sacrament here is the consecration of bread and wine, and the consecration constitutes the sacrifice; its fulfilment in the communion it already promises is not strictly to be called sacrament, but sacramental eating of the sacramental victim. All that Christ's death in the physical order did for us is done now in the order of sign, i.e., in the sacramental order, by the transubstantiation of bread and wine into his body and blood, so that his past death assures our present salvation. That was a physical sacrifice, offered once for all; this is a sacrifice in the order of sign, i.e., a sacramental sacrifice, which is given to men to offer continually, to show forth both his death and his coming advent in glory.

But these are random sallies, and there is, I believe, a more telling criticism. The book proceeds from Real Presence to Sacrifice and then to Communion, and the author's viewpoint can be given in his own words: 'In this sacrament Christ becomes present so that (a) He may abide bodily among us by His Real Presence in our tabernacles . . .' Silence here is surely more expressive than words.

THEODORE TAYLOR O.P.

SCRIPTURE IN THE LITURGY. By Charles Burgard, translated by J. Holland Smith; Challoner Publications; 11s. 6d.

Many Catholics in England today are anxious to improve their knowledge of the Bible, but they find difficulty in approaching it: they do not know in what light to read it. The idea behind Fr Burgard's book is that it is the liturgy that provides the proper setting for reading the Bible, for in the liturgy we have the Church to guide us in our understanding of the text. The book is arranged according to the seasons of the liturgical year. As the great mysteries of the

redemption are presented, the reader is introduced to all the themes of the history of salvation which bind the diverse literature of the Bible into an organic whole. With an admirable brevity he explains the difficult biblical symbolism that many now find so strange. The reader becomes familiar with the most important texts and their traditional interpretation and gains a perspective that will at once facilitate a fruitful study of sacred scripture, and render the liturgy more comprehensible. There can be no doubt that many will find this book a great help.

Unfortunately the English translation has diminished its worth. The author took the trouble to furnish his text with footnotes to facilitate further study. Many of the works referred to are in translation if, indeed, they were not originally written in English, but the translator is content to refer his readers to the French editions. On p. 116 a passage from Newman's Sermon 'Divine Calls' (*Parochial and Plain Sermons* (1871) vol. 8, p. 24) is actually re-translated from the French translation with the note: 'cf. Newman in *Le Chrétien*'. The sense has been seriously distorted in the process. With such blemishes as these, it is hardly right that this translation should cost three shillings more than the French original.

PAULINUS MILNER O.P.

SPIRITUALITÉ DU BAPTÊME. By Thomas Camelot O.P.; Les Editions du Cerf; 10.80 N.F.

The well known French Dominican, Père Camelot, patristic scholar and theologian, has given us a book in which the Church's teaching on the sacrament of baptism throughout the tradition is presented in a very readable form. There is hardly an aspect of the subject on which he does not offer pertinent remarks: baptism as profession of faith, as illumination, and the difficult subject of the necessity of faith for its fruitful reception; baptism as death to sin and as resurrection to new life, the anointing and seal of the Spirit, the relation of baptism to confirmation and its connection with the baptism of Christ. The author draws on his wide knowledge of the Greek and Latin Fathers and his book presents a very fine collection of patristic texts. But though it is a product of deep thought and scholarship it is not a theological essay for the digestion of theologians nor a text book for seminarians: it is addressed to the growing body of lay folk who wish to deepen their understanding of the faith. In the spirit of the catechetical sermons of the Fathers, it is not destined only to instruct, but is offered as a practical guide and inspiration for the Christian life. The author is anxious to show how the act of our baptism symbolizes and sets the pattern for that journey through the waters of life in the footsteps of Christ to which it commits us. All these fine qualities combine to make this book outstanding among the many works of popular theology that keep coming from the press. It is to be hoped that it will soon appear in a worthy English translation.

PAULINUS MILNER O.P.

L'ÉGLISE ET LES INSTITUTS SÉCULIERS. By Salvatore Canals; Desclée de Brouwer, 69 FB.

This book is a French translation from the Italian, and its author and subject are introduced in a preface by Fr J.-M. Perrin O.P. The author, Don Salvatore Canals, is a Spanish priest of the secular institute known as the *Opus Dei*, and is the president of the standing committee for secular institutes within the Sacred Congregation for Religious. His book is therefore written with special competence.

'Secular institutes are associations of clerics or lay persons, who, though living in the world, profess the evangelical counsels, and intend to strive for Christian perfection and to devote their lives entirely to the apostolate'. Membership in one of these societies presupposes a special vocation analogous to that of the religious life or of the priesthood.

Before the apostolic constitution '*Provida Mater Ecclesia*', 2nd February 1947, a person who did not belong to a religious order or congregation could not be in a legally recognized state of Christian perfection; after the promulgation of this 'historic document for the inner life of the Church' it has become perfectly possible for a cleric or a lay person living in the world to embrace a state of perfection, not simply in a private capacity, but in forms recognised by the Church and in Institutes which the Church approves. This development in ecclesiastical institutions is not only of juridical importance but indicates the adaptability of the Church to current needs, and is of theological significance. Accordingly Don Salvatore Canals makes his study of secular institutes from the historical, theological, and canonical standpoint. He has relied largely on papal documents, and on the address given by Pope Pius XII in the year 1950.

Those who join secular institutes commit themselves in a stable manner by profession to the three counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, varying according to their particular constitutions, vow, promise, or oath. These pledges are private in character, and do not alter the personal, canonical, and secular status of those who make them. They wear no distinctive habit, and are generally not bound to common life in the same way as this is organized for religious. Their entire life is directed towards the apostolate, but they may still retain their secular occupations. Clerics retain their incardination in the diocese to which they belong, or may be incardinated in the secular institute.

The publishers are justified in recommending this work as the most thorough book of reference on the subject of secular institutes. The need for such a book is indicated by the fact that, within the space of ten years after the publication of the *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, the *magna charta* of secular institutes, no less than 197 associations have made application to the Holy See for approval, of which 49 have been already approved.

AMBROSE FARRELL O.P.

JESUS-CHRIST. By H.-D. Lacordaire; Editions du Cerf, 7.20 NF.

VIE DE SAINT DOMINIQUE. By H.-D. Lacordaire; Editions du Cerf, 8.70NF.

It is very fitting that, with the centenary of Père Lacordaire's death very much in their hearts and minds this year, the French Dominicans should have brought out these two books with the purpose of reviving both public interest in the person of their 'restorer' and the desire to meditate upon his life and teaching.

This has been particularly well achieved in *Jesus-Christ*, a selection from Lacordaire's correspondence, his conferences at Notre-Dame de Paris and in Toulouse, and his essays on Mary Magdalene. These texts, especially the extracts from his letters and conferences, must have been chosen partly for the perfection of Lacordaire's style, which in other works seems so often marked by the century in which he lived, but more so for the way they point to the thesis of P. Carré's introduction: 'La rencontre avec Jesus-Christ'. Would not this meeting with Christ, he asks, have provided the remedy to Lacordaire's earlier years of instability? The way Lacordaire has himself talked and written of this meeting has led P. Carré to wonder whether it had not in fact and almost physically taken place. And the answer he gives to this question led him to draw the great lines of Lacordaire's spiritual itinerary, from a vague religious philosophy to his return to God, bringing simultaneously rather than gradually, a call to the priesthood. It was not however, until much later, after 'years of troubles, changes, errors and doubts', marked only by the 'immovable assurance of his vocation' that Lacordaire could say: 'one meets Jesus-Christ here on earth as one would meet any other man. One day, turning a street corner or in a solitary lane, one stops and listens and a voice in one's conscience says: this is Jesus-Christ' . . . and write to some young friends of his: 'since I have known Christ, nothing has ever seemed to me beautiful enough to be desired'.

This introduction, far-reaching in the psychological insight it reveals, would be well worth reading on its own, but the selected extracts that follow make the book a most appetizing preparation for any further reading. It is, by the way, quite fascinating to compare the beautifully poetical and rhetorical styles of these two great Dominican writers and orators and not surprising to know that they have, each in turn, drawn crowds to Notre-Dame with the might of their preaching.

As one who had known and loved Lacordaire well, Montalembert was able to write of him: 'when all the secrets of this generous life are known, the orator will fade away before the religious . . .' It is, I think, in this context that we should approach Lacordaire's *Life of St Dominic* and realise that his Dominican vocation had undoubtedly been the cause—as it still is the light—of this work. Lacordaire was neither by nature nor by profession a historian, but his extraordinary vocation enabled him to understand and discern through the problems of the nineteenth century, the permanent confrontation of the Church and the world, and the Dominican vision as it stood six centuries before his time.

P. Chenu O.P., who wrote the preface to this book, asserts the value of the

work of both the historian and the artist. While recognising that Lacordaire was not fully equipped to carry out the former and that present methods of research and new data have brought to light a better interpretation of the moral background of the thirteenth century, it would nevertheless be wrong to support the literary romanticism of the biography by adding meticulous erudition. Although strict investigation of the past is undoubtedly the scientific basis of history, there must be from the start a deep perception of mind to grasp the human meaning behind the facts and events. It seems then that, as it stands, with Lacordaire's own limitations and those of his time, his *Life of St Dominic* partakes of authentic history. His own illuminating preface to the first edition has very appropriately been reprinted here too.

SIMONE WYN GRIFFITH

MARY WARD 1585-1645. By Mary Oliver, I.B.V.M.; Sheed and Ward, 18s.

To know Mary Ward is to love her and to find in her, after the lapse of three centuries, one who exemplified those qualities most needed in our own time—a recollected spirit hand in hand with almost ceaseless apostolic work, far-seeing initiative combined with prudence and common sense, and, above all, that gaiety, vitality, and courage which present sanctity in its most attractive light. This astounding Englishwoman is still comparatively little known in English-speaking countries and this is partly because no full length popular biography has been available. Mother Oliver has now put us greatly in her debt by providing such a biography.

She has handled with dexterity the complex unwieldy mass of material that concerns Mary Ward's life-work, and contrived to produce a complete narrative with pace and liveliness that holds one's interest throughout. The sordid tale of ecclesiastical and secular intrigue which formed the background of Mary's labours and the major stumbling block to their success is touched on without bitterness and treated with the discretion and charity typical of Mary's own attitude to her enemies. Considerable care, too, has been taken to give a vivid and accurate picture of the practical details of the education for girls offered by Mary's Institute in her own day.

Imaginative reconstruction is a legitimate medium in this kind of biography, especially, as with Mary's childhood, where few facts are available; but it has pitfalls which Mother Oliver has not managed wholly to avoid. She has, it is true, been careful to put only words which we know to be her own into Mary's mouth, but she has not hesitated to reconstruct Mary's thoughts in a manner which some readers may find rather jarring. A disturbing note of sentimentality creeps into the more fictionalized passages and even a suggestion of that melodrama which the somewhat misleading publisher's blurb will have led the reader to expect. Yet both sentimentality and sensationalism were utterly alien to Mary Ward.

The introduction and epilogue by Maisie Ward are admirable in emphasizing the essential trust in God which was at the root of Mary Ward's spirituality, and in calling attention to the late Pope's wish that the apostolic spirit of that 'incomparable woman' should be an inspiration for our own time. The format of the book is attractive and it is pleasing to note that the most authentic of the known portraits, the Augsburg one, has been chosen for the dust jacket. It is to be hoped that in any future edition it will appear in less ephemeral form, perhaps as a frontispiece.

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